

SCHOOL FOODSERVICE MANAGER ESSENTIALS

AN OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL MEALS

The Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs oversees the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) School Nutrition Programs in Montana. The term "School Nutrition Programs" is a blanket term that refers to all the meal programs run through schools: The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program, Special Milk Program, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and the Food Distribution Program (commodities). School Nutrition also runs the Montana Cooperative Bid Program. When your school participates in one of these programs, the food served to children must meet USDA requirements.



According to age/grade groupings, over the course of a week all school meals must meet...

- **Recommended Daily Allowances (RDA)**
 - One-third RDA for lunch
 - One-fourth RDA for breakfast
 - Age appropriate
- **Calorie Goals**
 - Age appropriate
- **Dietary Guidelines for Americans**

These goals are the basis for the design of the menu plans (see "Menu Planning Options"). Schools can choose to use a food-based plan (Traditional or Enhanced) or a nutrient-standard plan (NuMenus). Schools using food-based plans are required to include a certain number of servings from all the food groups daily. Schools using nutrient-standard plans are required to provide foods that meet the Recommended Daily Allowance over the course of the week according to a computer nutrient analysis.

Nutrients monitored are:

- ✓ *Calories*
- ✓ *Fiber*
- ✓ *Protein*
- ✓ *Calcium*
- ✓ *Iron*
- ✓ *Vitamins A & C*
- ✓ *Total fat and saturated fat*

It is important to realize that children have energy and nutrient requirements that are higher than adults. School meals are designed to meet these age specific needs, which means they are higher in calories and fat than an average adult appropriate meal. It is also important to notice that school meals are designed to meet nutrition requirements over time. For example, one meal might consist of high fat foods, but it should be balanced out over the course of the week by lower fat meals.

MENU PLANNING OPTIONS

- **Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning:** This is the oldest menu planning system. It is based on the four food groups: milk, meat/meat alternate, bread/grains, and fruits/vegetables. This system requires food group components in the specified amounts for the different age/grade groups every day.

Using the Traditional plan, a reimbursable lunch for grades 4-12 must consist of...

- ✓ 2 ounces of lean meat or meat alternate (other protein food)
- ✓ 1 slice of bread or ½ cup grains (8 servings per week)
- ✓ ¾ cup of a combination of vegetable and fruit (two different kinds)
- ✓ 8 fluid ounces of milk

- **Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning:** Similar to the Traditional system, but this system is modeled after the Food Guide Pyramid, and thus requires more servings of Fruits/Vegetables and Grains/Breads.

Specifically, lunches for grades 6-12 must provide...

- ✓ 2 ounces of lean meat
- ✓ At least 15 servings of grains over the week
- ✓ At least 1 cup of fruits/vegetables every day (two different kinds)
- ✓ 8 fluid ounces of milk

- **Nutrient-Standard Nutrient-Based Menu Planning (NSMP or NuMenus):** This meal plan is based on nutrients, not food groups. Schools that use this meal plan are required to conduct a computer analysis of their menus to ensure that they meet at least one-third of the RDA in specific nutrients (listed above) for lunch and one-fourth of the RDA for breakfast. *It is important to remember that nutrients are averaged for a whole week, so some meals may be higher or lower in certain nutrients as long as they balance out over the course of a week.*

For lunch, schools using NSMP must include...

- ✓ Entrée
- ✓ Side dish.
- ✓ 8 fluid ounces of milk served as a beverage

- **Assisted NSMP:** Exactly like NSMP except *menu planning and analysis is conducted by an agency other than the school food service*. This option is useful for schools that do not have access to the equipment they would need to conduct a menu analysis.

- **Offer Versus Serve (OVS):** This is a menu planning option for grades K-8, and a requirement for grades 9-12. A school either participates in offer versus serve or does not participate in offer versus serve at the school's discretion. Offer versus serve gives children the option to turn down one or more of the meal components. This option is used in conjunction with food-based or nutrient-standard menu planning.
- **If a school IS offer versus serve:** For food-based menu planners, children may turn down one or two of the five components. For nutrient-standard, children may turn down either the side dish or the milk. They must take the entrée. High schools are required to participate in offer versus serve and must allow students to turn down two of the five components on the food-based menu planning systems.
 - **If a school IS NOT offer versus serve,** children must take ALL of the meal components in order to have a reimbursable meal.

Benefits of OVS: Less food waste, potential cost savings (may be able to prepare less food), increased customer satisfaction, and students are more likely to eat better when they are allowed choices.

PRODUCTION RECORD

Requirements:

- The production record is required for every reimbursable meal served. This is your school's "receipt" that shows that a reimbursable meal was served.
- Production records must be kept on file for 3 years plus the current year.
- Production records are menu planning option specific; meaning that Traditional and Enhanced menu planners use the food-based form, and NuMenus menu planners use the nutrient-standard form.
- Required documentation includes:
 - Date
 - Menu
 - Check appropriate boxes: Traditional, Enhanced, or NuMenus; Meal (Breakfast, Lunch, After School Snack); Offer vs. Serve
 - Number of Meals Served: Grades; Total Student Meals; Total Adult/Other Meals; Total Meals Served
 - Planned Serving Size: Traditional: Breakfast K-12; Lunch K-3, 4-12, optional 7-12
Enhanced: Breakfast K-12, optional 7-12; Lunch K-6, 7-12, optional K-3
NuMenus: Breakfast: K-12, optional 7-12; Lunch K-6, 7-12, optional K-3
 - Components (remember to include condiments)
 - Total Food Used and/or Recipe number
- Optional documentation includes:
 - Food Temp: It is recommended that temperatures be taken and recorded prior to service.
 - Amount Over/Short: This will help you adjust food production the next time an item that was significantly over or short is on the menu.
 - Unit Cost and Total Cost: It is recommended that menu costs be documented for cost control.
 - Comments: Record comments regarding any problem or special event that affected the meal.

STANDARDIZED RECIPES

A “standardized” recipe is much like any other recipe. It is a recipe that has been tried, tested, evaluated and adapted for use by a foodservice. It produces a consistent quality and yield every time when exact procedures, equipment and ingredients are followed.

Requirements:

- Schools participating in the School Nutrition Programs are required to use and keep standardized recipes on file.
- Standardized recipes must include:
 - Recipe name and number
 - Ingredients
 - Measure or weight of ingredients
 - Specific directions including baking temperature and time
 - Serving size
 - Number of servings (yield)
 - Meal pattern components that is contributes to

Benefits:

- Saves time on paperwork. If your school has a standardized recipe for a food product, simply write the recipe name, serving size, and number on the production record. The serving size is the individual portion size of the whole recipe, not the individual components. This only needs to be written ONCE, even if a recipe includes more than one component.
- Ensures a consistent product.
- Increases participation. Think about your favorite food at your favorite restaurant. Would it still be your favorite if it wasn't the same each time you ate it?

There are some great standardized recipes already developed and available for school foodservice use. To download the recipes, go to the National Food Service Management Institute's web site:

http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/school_recipe_index_alpha.html.

INVENTORY

Schools are encouraged to conduct a physical inventory (where a staff person physically counts the food on the shelf) at least once a month. Commodities do not need to be kept separate on the inventory, but they **MUST** be included. Schools have the option of using a perpetual inventory (an on-going tally where food is added and subtracted as it enters and leaves the store room) in conjunction with the physical inventory.

COUNTING MEALS

- Meals must be counted at the Point Of Service (POS). A point of service meal count is defined as a system of counting meals at that point in the food service operation where it can be accurately determined that a reimbursable free, reduced-price or paid meal has been served to an eligible student.
- Meals must also be checked at this time to ensure that they are reimbursable. A “reimbursable” meal varies from school to school and site to site depending on the menu planning option used (food-based, nutrient-standard, offer versus serve).

CIVIL RIGHTS

School foodservices must:

- Display the “And Justice For All” poster where meal participants can see and read it.
- Never withhold benefits or meals on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.
- Never withhold meals as a form of punishment.
- Provide meals for children with disabilities as described in the USDA’s *Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs*.
- Count meals in such a way as there is no overt identification of participants receiving free or reduced-price meals. In other words, no one should be able to determine a child’s free/reduced status except the school staff who work directly with the School Nutrition Program. If your job requires you to know, or if you ever find out which children qualify for free or reduced price meals by accident, understand that this information is CONFIDENTIAL, and keep it to yourself.

SANITATION AND FOOD SAFETY

- All schools participating in the School Nutrition Programs are required to have two sanitation inspections per year. A form to request these inspections from the local health department is available on our website.
- Schools must be licensed through the Department of Public Health and Human Services, and pay a licensure fee each January to continue serving meals.
- Schools must also have a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan in place by the end of the 2005-06 school year.

PLANNING HEALTHFUL MENUS

- Be a role model for healthy eating habits.
- Meet fat content standards in menu planning.
- Limit high fat entrees (>15 grams of fat/serving) to two times a week.
- Use lower fat salad dressings and make reduced fat sauces/gravies.
- Offer and promote low fat milk (1% or skim).
- Promote fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to students.
- Avoid super-size portions of desserts and snack items.
- Offer and promote water to students.
- Promote “reimbursable” a la carte meals and healthful a la carte items.
- Promote the habit of eating breakfast to students: extend hours, adjust service style, and offer grab and go items.
- Educate students on nutrition through cafeteria displays, menus and newsletters.
- Advocate and support healthier food and beverage choices throughout the school by means of partnerships with school staff and community members.

MAKING MEALTIME PLEASANT

Lunch time should be a pleasant experience. It is the time of day that children have to relax and visit with their friends while they enjoy a nutritious meal.

1. **Make sure that meal scheduling is appropriate.** It is recommended that lunch be scheduled between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Breakfast may be scheduled anytime in the morning, if schools want to provide a breakfast as part of the school day.
2. **Make sure that there is adequate time to eat.** It is recommended that children have at least 20 minutes to eat a lunch meal after sitting down. Children need at least 10 minutes after receiving a breakfast meal to eat.
3. **Implement a “recess before lunch” policy.** Allowing elementary children to play first and then eat their lunch is beneficial to students. Studies show that children consume food better and drink more milk. Teachers report that students are more focused when they return to the classroom. Teachers also report that cafeteria and playground behavior is improved (less discipline problems). The noise level is reduced with implementation of this policy leading to a more pleasant atmosphere for students and school staff.
4. **Presence of school staff can increase food intake.** A recent study found that when a teacher is present during mealtime to encourage children to try new foods and select a variety of foods, food consumption and milk intake is better.
5. **Encourage but never force a child to eat.** Encourage children to “try one bite,” often called the “thank you bite” to the cooks who prepared the food. Offer small portions when introducing new foods so children do not feel overwhelmed with portion size.
6. **Offer choices to children through menu selection and “self-serve.”** Children eat better when offered a choice, especially when it comes to fruits and vegetables. Try offering two choices of fruits and vegetables a day and letting children help themselves. It can be as simple as fresh grapes and applesauce or raw carrots and cooked whole kernel corn.
7. **Obtain input from teachers, parents and students about making the cafeteria environment pleasant.** Survey teachers, parents and students about ways to make the eating experience more enjoyable. Some schools play music; have updated cafeteria décor and even occasional entertainment.
8. **Encourage adults to model healthy habits in the cafeteria.** Encourage staff to occasionally eat lunch with the students so the students may see them making healthy food choices. This is a great opportunity to interact with students, reinforce good table manners and socialize with the students.
9. **Train lunchroom duty staff about appropriate supervisory techniques for managing the school cafeteria.** Develop appropriate training for those who supervise the cafeteria to maintain a safe, orderly and pleasant dining experience for the students, teachers and visiting parents.



TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

- “*A Menu Planner for Healthy School Meals.*” **Every school that participates in School Nutrition Programs should have a copy of this purple binder.** It has complete information on reimbursable meals including charts, grade groups, menu planning suggestions, and much more. This resource is available on the Team Nutrition web site: www.fns.usda.gov/tn/
- Call School Nutrition Programs at the Office of Public Instruction at (406) 444-2501, or look online at www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/index.html. This web site has blank forms, information, and links to resources like the USDA and Team Nutrition.
- For more information on USDA’s Child Nutrition Programs, go to www.fns.usda.gov
- **MONTANA LUNCHLINE:** This resource is a “must” for all foodservice managers. This is the primary method by which the School Nutrition office communicates with foodservice managers around the state, and is also a great way to network with other school foodservice managers. To sign up, contact Katie Bark at (406) 994-5641 or kbark@mt.gov.



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